

GODFREY HOMESTEAD
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Madison Co

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CENTRAL ILLINOIS DISTRICT NO.25

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
EDGAR E. LUNDEEN DISTRICT OFFICER
BLOOMINGTON ILLINOIS

The Godfrey Homestead, Godfrey, Madison County, Illinois

by Herbert E. Hewitt, Peoria, Illinois, April 1934

Captain Benjamin Godfrey was born in Chatham, Massachusetts May 20, 1794. At the age of nine years he went to sea, later becoming a ship captain; acquiring a fortune in the shipping business, which was later lost in a ship wreck. After this he was in Mexico, where he entered a trading business and soon amassed another fortune, only to be robbed of this as he started for the United States.

Arriving in New Orleans he formed a mercantile business partnership with W. S. Gilman. This business flourished and the operations were expanded.

In 1832, the firm "Godfrey and Gilman Company" began operations in Alton. Rapid success and growth followed. Captain Godfrey quickly assuming a position of importance in the community and State. He was a large owner of real estate having ten thousand acres at one time; four thousand in Madison County at his death on August 13, 1862.

He built a railroad between Alton and Springfield (now a part of the Alton Railroad). In 1835 he gave \$110,000 to found the Monticello Seminary at Godfrey, a now famous school for girls.

The Godfrey homestead was built by Calvin Riley in 1881-33 a mile north of the present village of Godfrey. This

property was conveyed to Captain Benjamin F. Godfrey, Dec. 5, 1833, who took possession in 1834. As built by Calvin Riley the house was one and one-half stories. Captain Godfrey raised the roof to a full two story and added the north wing circa 1835, leaving the house as it now stands with minor exceptions.

The house is built with 18" walls of local limestone, and the structural lumber is of oak and other native trees. The exterior millwork is apparently the work of unskilled craftsmen, both in design and execution. Although there is an occasional profile which suggests the Greek Revival, it is as tho it were designed from a hazy memory. The interiors indicate a higher quality of craftsmanship, the millwork presumably being imported from New Orleans or Massachusetts. The atmosphere of the whole indicates a southern influence.

The building is now owned and occupied by Wm. L. Waters and family, who purchased it circa 1909.

Reference: "History of Madison County" Pgs. 505-506

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by F. H. S.

(Approved)

George E. Lundeen